



Transportation Advisory Committee

Date: June 14, 2023.

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

Minutes.

Members in Attendance: Beth Benedikt., Lenard Diggins., Melissa Laube., Scott Smith., James Stubbe., Laura Swan (Chair)., Shoji Takahashi, John Alessi.

Members Absent: John Aslanian., Wayne Chouinard (DPW)., Jeff Maxtutis., Tycho Nightingale., Corey Rateau (APD).

Members of Public in Attendance: Vincent Baudoin., Marvin Lewiton., Jennifer Litowski., Paul Schlichtman.

1. Administration.

The Chair provided notice regarding Remotely Conducted Meetings, referring the members to the agenda attachment entitled "Governor Charles Baker's 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law". The Chair reviewed the meeting ground rules and announced that the meeting was being recorded.

Tycho Nightingale has resigned as Member-At-Large due to other time commitments. TAC will seek to add Associate Members.

A. Approval of May 10, 2023 Meeting Notes.

Minutes for the Meeting of May 10, 2023, were approved subject to the following correction: Melissa Laube did not speak to the resident at Dow Ave / Rhinecliff St; she reviewed the letter correspondence.

B. Officer Elections.

The Nominating Committee nominated the following officers for the next term: Laura Swan as Chair, Jeff Maxtutis as Co-Vice Chair, Jim Stubbe as Co-Vice

Chair, and Shoji Takahashi as Secretary. TAC approved the nomination of the officers for the next term.

C. Correspondence sent/received from 5/7/23 to 6/9/23.

1. **“Request for Stop Sign on Regis Road,”** Letter from the Select Board to TAC, 6/6/23. Laura Swan informed TAC that Regis Rd is a one-way street moving traffic towards Thompson School which was recently repaved. Neighbors have noted increased motor vehicle speeds and are requesting that a stop sign be added at the intersection of Everett St. Notably, Regis Rd is a private way, and DPW is cautious about adding signs to a private way as it might not have authority to do so.

Paul Schlichtman said that issue is on the School Committee meeting agenda as it abuts Thompson School. He observed that there are many instances of stop signs on private ways entering public ways throughout the Town, and the Town has a right to regulate vehicles entering public ways. Due to volume of pedestrian traffic, particularly children entering/exiting the school and the adjacent park, this is an urgent matter. Scott Smith added that this is a similar situation to Wellesley Ave, where a stop sign was erected, except that Wellesley is a public way. He recommended that TAC return to the Select Board and inquire with Town Counsel on the legality of adding a stop sign. Jim Stubbe recommended that DPW contact the abutters to add a stop sign, which costs ~\$200. Len Diggins said that he will talk with Town Counsel on the matter and update Laura Swan and Scott Smith, who comprise the Working Group for Thompson School. The Working Group will send the appropriate correspondence to the Select Board.

2. **“Request to Address Clearance Issues...[on Winter St],”** Letter from the Select Board to TAC, 6/6/23. TAC discussed this with Oxford St agenda item as there are similar and related issues on traffic and people moving through area.

2. Public Comments (for information only, not for action).

Marvin Lewiton, Precinct 16 Town Meeting Member, commented on the Appleton / Wachusett / Dow / Valentine intersection as being problematic, noting that Select Board Member Steve DeCoursey has said this intersection has been a problem for many years. He added that residents have sent correspondence to the Town and have not received a response.

Jim Stubbe responded that there is a Working Group examining the intersection. Observations show that drivers are well behaved at the intersection. Crash data show four crashes in last 20 years, and MassDOT police reported crashes (not minor fender benders) show no crashes between 2019 – 2021.

3. Town Issues/Activities (not already on the agenda).

A. Update from the Department of Public Works (Bill Copithorne, DPW) via email.

DPW Facility Update: New building is officially open; site work and renovations to old buildings continue. Engineering Division has moved back to Grove St on the 2nd floor of the new building with the rest of the DPW offices.

Pavement Preservation Project: Project areas include Sunnyside/Gardner and Windsor/Trowbridge neighborhoods. Preliminary work (leveling course and structure adjustments) on rubber chip seal streets began last week and may last into next week. The final surface application is anticipated in August.

Brick Sidewalks: A small project is underway to make repairs to sections of brick sidewalk along Mass Ave, which will likely be completed this month.

Minuteman Bikeway Alewife Bridge Resurfacing: no update.

B. Update from the Department of Planning and Community Development (John Alessi, DPCD).

Select Board and MBTA have agreed to a short extension of the Mass Ave Bus-and-Bike Lane from Boulevard Rd to Alewife Brook Pkwy (into Cambridge). This will be a 24/7 Bus/Bike Lane, and construction will be coordinated with DPW.

Stratton SRTS project is at the 25% design stage and right-of-way acquisition is in process with Town Counsel. A special Town Meeting is scheduled for November to approve the acquisition of property for construction in 2025.

Bike Lane Design Matrix guide is being updated with Toole Design. A kickoff meeting is being scheduled. Toole Design will seek feedback from TAC and ABAC.

New Bluebikes-station installations have been delayed due to ongoing contract negotiations with Lyft. The two new locations were chosen based on previous Town surveys: Arlington High School and Minuteman Bikeway at Mill St. These are being installed under a grant from MPO to Arlington/Newton/Watertown.

C. There was no update from the Police Department (APD).

4. Discussion: Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.

John Alessi said that the Complete Streets Prioritization public meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. Eighteen projects throughout the Town will be described, and the consultant, Kittleson, will display the full project list to the public.

These eighteen projects were chosen based on a number of criteria including: public survey (receiving 1,200+ resident responses on corridors and top 3 intersections); DPW, DPCD, and APD priorities; previously completed plans such as Connect Arlington and the Minuteman Bikeway to Mystic River Project; and TAC project recommendations among others.

The meeting is seeking public feedback on prioritizing the projects. The meeting will include four breakout rooms followed by a public survey.

The completed Prioritization Plan will permit the Town to seek up to \$500,000 in funding over 4 years from MassDOT. It will also provide prioritization for the Town to look to other grant opportunities.

Joe Solomon recommended that the Town seek to fund a larger number of smaller projects. John Alessi concurred, adding that funding smaller projects could demonstrate tangible improvements to residents on a shorter time frame.

5. New Business: Broadway Corridor.

Laura Swan informed TAC on the Broadway Neighborhood Coalition and EALS seeking lower speeds and traffic calming on Broadway. The Broadway corridor can be enhanced through better street design to improve the environment for residents and companies.

Traffic patterns along Broadway are strongly influenced by nearby Gibbs School, Thompson School, Lesley Ellis, and daycare centers. Mystic Valley Pkwy in Somerville is undergoing a road diet, which may cause more traffic to redirect to River St and Bates Rd. Relatedly, parallel streets should be examined as GPS navigation apps may reroute traffic through residential streets.

Utility replacement work is scheduled to be conducted on Broadway in the near future, providing an opportunity for street configuration changes.

Vincent Baudoin and Jen Litowski organized the Broadway Meeting. Residents are seeking ways to speed improvements and traffic calming without requiring long studies and reviews. They are proposing a toolkit (details to-be-determined) with “ready-to-go”, maintenance friendly solutions. Oxford St and Winter St, near Lesley Ellis School, could serve as pilot locations for such a toolkit (see Agenda Item #6, below).

Laura Swan remarked that TAC members having East Arlington / Mass Ave corridor experience might have unique insight on how to move forward productively with a Broadway Corridor discussion.

6. New Business: Winter St and Oxford St.

John Aslanian attended the Winter St / Oxford St meeting on Saturday at Lesley Ellis School, and he provided a written summary. He noted that the traffic issues and concerns extend to the school corridors of Thompson School, Lesley Ellis School, Learn to Grow, and even with Gibbs School.

Approximately 18 people were in attendance including Lesley Ellis Head of School Deanne Benson. Three buckets of strategies were identified: (1) traffic management; (2) short term traffic-calming options, and (3) long-term traffic calming options.

The speed and volume of traffic has increased to unsafe levels, due primarily to the use of the streets as cut-throughs. Rapid turns at corners (e.g., Mass Ave / Winter St and Broadway / Oxford St) are dangerous.

For possible immediate action: Place a Do-Not-Enter One Way sign on Oxford St at the northside of Raleigh St. There have been an increased number of drivers turning left from Raleigh St to get to the tennis courts, driving the wrong way. If there is no place for them to park, the drivers continue to the intersection with Broadway.

Arrival/Dismissal at Lesley Ellis School has degraded and become unsafe. There is a lack of personnel to direct traffic and instruct drivers at arrival/dismissal time.

The increased use of the pickleball/tennis courts and park contributes to more automobile parking which limits visibility of pedestrians in the area. Laura Swan added that TAC received a Memo from the Select Board regarding a resident's letter about the width of Winter St and a request to add "No Parking" by the tennis courts.

Jen Litowski, who attended the meeting, provided additional comments to John Aslanian's summary. She noted attendees included area residents, the Head of Lesley Ellis, and parents, grandparents, and guardians of preschools. She said that this topic is important to the attendees as a student was hit by a driver in March, 2023, on Oxford St, and they are concerned about safety. Winter St and Oxford St are heavily traveled due to the school and park, and are used by cut-through traffic.

Laura Swan recommended that TAC review the 2009 Winter St Report on the TAC webpage and also suggested MassDOT's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program to conduct an Arrival/Dismissal audit. John Alessi checked and confirmed that Lesley Ellis is not eligible as SRTS works with public schools or charter schools and not private schools (Lesley Ellis).

A Working Group was formed to examine Winter St and Oxford St comprising: John Aslanian, Beth Benedikt, Jen Litowski, and Shoji Takahashi.

7. Update: Chestnut St Improvements.

Chestnut St project is on time. Curb work and sidewalk work nearing completion (~1 – 2 weeks remaining); structure adjustments (i.e., manholes, water-valve boxes, etc.) to follow (~1 week). DPW is awaiting the anticipated schedule for final paving. The installation of RRFBs will occur after final paving is completed.

Improvements to islands and lighting are in the planning phase. If adequate funding is available, they will be completed this construction season, otherwise they will likely be completed during the 2024 construction season.

Upgrades to curb ramps and sections of sidewalk in and abutting the Russell Common Municipal Lot have been completed.

8. Park Ave.

Jeff Maxtutis and Melissa Laube will form a Working Group.

Joe Solomon noted that there are six or seven crosswalks on Park Ave between Mass Ave and Route 2, and he inquired if there can be a standardized approach to implement short-term improvements to all of them.

Laura Swan said that MWRA utility repairs are scheduled in the near future, and Wayne Chouinard (DPW) has done curb designs in anticipation of the coming work.

John Alessi added that there is often funding available for short-term improvements, but a challenge is maintenance. DPW will need to install treatments such as bollards and incorporate them into the maintenance plan.

Separately, Joe Solomon asked about missing speed limit signs on this stretch of Park Ave. He will discuss the missing speed limit signs with Corey Rateau (APD).

9. Update: Eastern Ave.

Laura Swan provided a brief update as the Working Group is examining whether a “speed safety zone” and “school zone” can overlap. The advantage of having a speed safety zone along Eastern Ave is that the reduced speed limit is not limited to school times, and activity at Robbins Farm Park occurs throughout the day and weekends.

10. Jason St (Hillsdale Island).

Jim Stubbe provided a brief summary of the location noting sweeping curves permitting high speed and large expanse of pavement making pedestrian crossing challenging. Pedestrian counts and observations were conducted on three different days. Traffic was “well behaved”, and, notably, the issue raised by the letter writer was not observed. He asked whether there was a compelling case for recommending changes such as squaring the intersection or installing a crosswalk.

Melissa Laube and Laura Swan noted that the Town has criteria for crosswalk installations based in-part on pedestrian counts per hour and provisions for children and elderly. Scott Smith added that there are now criteria in the MUTCD.

Shoji Takahashi added that DPW remarked previously that there were reasons changes were not made in 2017. TAC can inquire further with DPW on specifics. Separately, reducing pavement for water [conservation] is important for the Town. Although squaring the intersection in the near-term might not be a high priority project, DPW might desire to draft a plan as a shovel-ready project in case a funding opportunity arises.

11. Pedestrian Flag Program.

Laura Swan will email TAC on possible dates for making TAC members to fabricate pedestrian-flag canisters to replenish the stocks. She noted that homemade flag canisters have been observed at locations in the Town.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.